Questions of gender and power in professional dance in Vietnam: A Western choreographer's perspective-

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ABSTRACT
As a female choreographer who has been working with dance artists in Hanoi since 1988 over nine cultural exchange projects, I have become fascinated by differences in artistic practice and aesthetics, and how that might relate to gender roles within the profession. The paper begins with a brief history of dance in Vietnam followed by a snapshot of current major dance organisations, and continues with an analysis of my experiences with *Nha Hat Nhac Vu Kich Viet Nam* (the Dance Theatre of Vietnam). As there is almost no literature on Vietnamese dance, observations necessarily come from primary sources, in particular from my own experiences of working intensively with the same group of dancers over a number of years. The paper explores gender and power relations within the workplace, gender roles in performance, non-performance opportunities for women including promotion and seniority, and documents a work I created for the women in the company. The paper concludes with observations on broader ramifications reflected in the particular situation examined.

I: INTRODUCTION - PROFESSIONAL DANCE DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

Dance as professional practice is of relatively recent occurrence, arising from initiatives of the Communist government in the north in 1959 when it set up the first dance and drama training institutions, although from 1950 artists had been sent to China and the Soviet Union to train professionally. But dance and theatre have always been a strong part of Vietnamese culture. According to Vietnamese scholars, dance dates back to the first century BC as evidenced by visual depictions on ancient drums (Mai Thi Tu & Le Thi Nham Tuyet, 1978:77).

In the Feudal period, dance was incorporated in the formal court operas of the ruling mandarins and have survived in the opera form *Tuong*. Folk forms are found in the *Cheo* theatre, which also continues to this day. In addition, the Viet villages and the ethnic minorities have a long tradition of songs and dances performed at festivals and ceremonies. Many of these village forms are still performed both in the villages and as theatrical adaptations by professional dancers based in major cities.

Unlike the Japanese forms of Kabuki and Noh, which were only performed by males, Vietnamese theatre and dance have always incorporated women performers. *Cheo*, 'the most distinctive and original type of Vietnamese theatre.....is a type of popular dance and parody' (Hoang Su, 1994:147) in the genre of narrative or 'story-telling' theatre. According to the fifteenth century scholar Luong The Vinh, *Cheo* was created by a woman, Pham Thi Tran, a dancer and singer living during the Dinh dynasty in the tenth century (in Mai Thi Tu & Le Thi Nham Tuyet, op. cit.: 77).

Although Vietnamese dance has adapted movements from these old theatre and dance traditions, training of professional dancers was set up on the model of Soviet classical ballet schools. Consequently the basis of Vietnamese professional dance has been, and still is, ironically, rooted in European ballet. But of the approximately fifty dance companies currently in Vietnam, only a handful perform classical ballet, the rest producing adaptations of stylised traditional dance. Ten of these companies are professional and three are national companies based in Hanoi.[1]

Both in the early training opportunities abroad, and in the setting up of dance institutions and companies, women took an active and sometimes pivotal role. In Western professional dance women constitute the vast majority of students, dancers and teachers, but in many of the major national companies - with some notable exceptions - positions of authority (managers, artistic directors and choreographers) have invariably been held by the considerably lesser number of men working in the profession.

[1] These and other statistics have been provided by Chu Thuy Quynh, Director, and her staff at the Association of Vietnamese Dance Artists. This is the professional service organisation for dance in Vietnam (interview in Hanoi, 19 June 1996).

In Vietnam the stigma of males becoming dancers, so problematic in the West, does not seem to exist. In fact being an artist of any kind and of either sex is a respected profession. Equal numbers of males and females are trained as dancers at the *Truong Mua Viet Nam* (National Dance School), although some companies may employ more female dancers than male. Teaching, since the end of the Second World War, has become a predominantly female occupation in Vietnam, although in dance at the present time there are many male teachers, particularly at the national training institutions.

II: GENDER ROLES IN PROFESSIONAL DANCE

a) A SNAPSHOT OF MAJOR DANCE ORGANISATIONS IN HANOI

In terms of positions of power, the current situation for women appears on the surface quite equitable. Of the six major national dance institutions, four professional companies and two training institutions, there are three women directors. Both training institutions have women directors, trained in Russia. **Nguyen Thi Thanh Thuy** is the Director of the ***Truong Mua Viet Nam*** **(Vietnam Dance School**) and **Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thi Hien**, founder and head of the **Dance Department of *Truong Dai Hoc San Khau Dien Anh Ha Noi* (Hanoi Institute of Theatre and Cinema). Chu Thuy Quynh** is both Director of ***Hoi Nghe Si Mua Viet Nam*** **(Association of Vietnamese Dance Artists**) and Director of ***Nha Hat Ca Mua Nhac Viet Nam*** **(National Song and Dance Company**) which performs traditional dance and music. Chu Thuy Quynh is also a member of the National Assembly and therefore has a political profile in addition to her high arts profile. ***Doan Ca Mua Nhac Thang Long*** **(Thang Long Performing Arts Company**) which performs some traditional dance, but is basically a 'variety ' troupe, is directed by a male **Le Trong Nghia.**

b) GENDER CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN THE DANCE THEATRE OF VIETNAM

The most prestigious national dance company is ***Nha Hat Nhac Vu Kich Vietnam*** **(Dance Theatre of Vietnam** also called in English the Vietnam Opera Ballet Theatre) which employs the cream of the dance graduates and performs Western ballet repertoire, some contemporary dance, and a traditional program mainly for international touring. Its Artistic Director**, Cong Nhac**, and two chief executives, Director **Quy Duong** and Manager **Hoang Xuan Nam** are male, as is the Rehearsal Director **Ha The Dung** and principal choreographer **Pham Anh Phuong**. Most unusual for any ballet company is the fact that, at the time of writing, it employs more male dancers than female.

c) GENDER ROLES IN PERFORMANCE

In relation to dance and in particular to the national company, Nha Hat Nhac Vu Kich Viet Nam, questions of gender and power relations are further complicated by the hierarchy of Western classical ballet operating within a Vietnamese context. Since the instrument of dance is the human body, the presentation, dynamics and qualities of the female body in performance become aspects for consideration.

In most traditional classical ballet companies female roles revolve around mythical female stereotypes, possessing an elusive ethereal quality which is unattainable yet desirable, aesthetic

rather than sexual. Lightness of movement and an illusion of never being firmly grounded, together with a neutered physical appearance of sylph-like proportions transcends earthly femininity, despite the extreme leg positions which in other contexts would appear almost pornographic. At the same time its extreme virtuosity makes it an art form of 'spectacle'.

Most Vietnamese traditional dance for women has a sense of modesty but is nevertheless firmly grounded in the earth, its movements subtle but at the same time having a certain alluring quality and a gentle sensuousness which reinforces the femininity of the performer. The legs are kept demurely together and the hands, arms, torso and face contain a myriad of subtleties which Westerners cannot always read until they learn to observe the detail. It is not virtuosic in an obvious way, though many dances require years of intensive training and skill. It tends to be decorative rather than expressive and, like ballet, a knowledge of its nuances enhances appreciation and enjoyment.

Male roles in both forms are predictably more energetic - at least in appearance - and more obviously athletic. They are also more direct in their connection with the audience. In traditional dance the focus of the women is often downcast or indirect which appears self-effacing in a way that the ballerina, in total and deliberate command of the space around her, is not.

On my first engagement with the company I found the combination in the women of virtuosic technique in terms of high extensions, jumps and multiple turns, together with a shyness of presentation, disconcerting. In introducing contemporary dance techniques where the deliberate use of weight and strength is emphasised rather than hidden, I quickly became frustrated, that despite their extensive training and ability, the women in the company seemed to be making little progress compared with the men. It did not seem to be a matter of lack of actual strength, for although light framed, these dancers possess a steely physical strength.

Considering the strong personalities that were often revealed in rehearsals, and observing how they stood up for themselves in the workplace, this reticence did not seem to be a simple matter of passivity or submission. Nor did it seem to be distaste for the style I was introducing, for it was clear that the women were keen to learn contemporary dance and had been excited and inspired by the few foreign performances they had seen.

In contrast to the women, the men were extraordinarily fast in picking up both the shape and dynamics of the new movements being introduced to them via contemporary dance classes and choreography. In addition, they were competitive in a way in which the women were not, which further hastened their progress. In spite of my commitment to feminist perspectives, I found myself drawn to the men when choreographing and teaching, especially as I had limited time and they had apparent facility and speed.

To exacerbate the women's lack of progress, they missed more rehearsals than the men and seemed to be sick more often. Even when the women were all present in rehearsal they sometimes seemed scarcely visible like footprints that barely leave a trace. I consciously had to force myself not to be taken into the easier male realm of confident physicality and use of space. Sometimes as the women held back in groups or hardly moved in a variation that was designed to cover space, I found a totally unnecessary anger welling up inside me. Their apparent submissiveness in class and rehearsal frustrated me, and I was unsure how to overcome it.

I had made the common mistake of unconsciously assuming that dancers were dancers, and despite obvious cultural differences, given our similar intensive and formative training, *modus operandi* (at least in the studio) and a common basis of movement language, that we would basically understand each other in a dance context. Although I was not entirely ignorant of the history, cultural practices and beliefs of the country, what I failed to grasp, at first, was how deeply aesthetics, taste, conditioned modes of physicality and emotional nuances worked through every fibre and muscle of the body, particularly the female body. As a fellow-woman I also felt guilty: I seemed to have more in common, as a dancer, with the men than with the women.

Later (in 1995) when I decided to make a work celebrating the different physicality of the female dancers within the company through a work about Vietnamese women, I had come to appreciate better the almost genetic effect of two thousand years of 'appropriate behaviour'; or *dung, ngon* and *hanh,* three of the four virtues of mandatory female behaviour in Confucian philosophy, which refer to 'modest demeanour', 'speaking softly in a self-demeaning way' and 'faultless principles particularly with respect to loyalty'. The women in the company do not believe in Confucian principles - they are all independent and strong minded women - and yet qualities of modesty and self-effacement are, on occasions, evident in their appearance and behaviour in both the private and professional arena; this, despite their adoption of the latest Western dress and mannerisms. I can naturally only see these qualities through my Anglo-Saxon eyes, but it seems that an aesthetic sensibility and preference has evolved, largely subliminal perhaps, in which age-old qualities become part of one's intrinsic view of oneself as a woman, without the exploitative associations they formerly represented.[2] Perhaps their re-invention in a contemporary context is the link these women have with a kind of ancestral continuity.

d) MAKING A WORK FOR THE WOMEN

[2] An interesting reinforcement of this occurred in 1997 when I was working in Vietnam and co-choreographing a new work with an Australian colleague of Malay-Chinese background. During a rehearsal one of the female dancers said she would feel uncomfortable dancing a duet role involving bodily contact (of a purely technical nature with no sexual references), yet I knew she had no problems dancing in brief costumes with raunchy movements in cabaret type performances. My Australian friend, though sharing many aesthetic preferences, philosophical and artistic attitudes with me, said that she understood this reticence and indeed felt quite strongly about preserving certain aspects of her own image and ways of dancing that she considered integral to her identity as an Asian woman.

Whatever the reason, the very qualities I had found difficult to come to terms with in the late eighties and early nineties, were the very qualities I wanted to explore in my 1995 work *Em, Nguoi Phu Nu Viet Nam.*[3] I incorporated traditional dance material so that the process became a collaborative one. I also tried to keep to a minimum my own stylistic preferences and movement vocabulary though, inevitably, they were embedded in the piece since the concept and direction were mine, and the dancers quite shy about contributing actual dance phrases.

I was interested in finding ways to bring out the latent strength I saw in their movement but in ways with which they would feel comfortable. One section used movement material from the Vietnamese martial art form of *Vo,* which I asked the male dancers to teach their female colleagues. Naturally the men, firstly put out that they were not going to be so featured in this production, and secondly not believing it would work in the piece, were quite sceptical, not so much about the ability of the women to execute the movements, but the effect this role reversal would have. This attitude made the women more determined and once the men had taught the movements, they were excluded from these rehearsals until we felt comfortable about the results. It was extraordinary for me to see the women adapt the strong masculine movements to their own sense of feminine strength and physical 'centre'. At the same time, I was working on a softer *tai chi* version of similar material with the men. Their gentle fluidity contrasting with the controlled yet pent up energy and tension of the women became a pivotal section of the work. Despite the choreographic and directorial weaknesses, the finished work had a powerful and lasting impact on Vietnamese audiences. Performed for predominantly Western audiences at an Australian festival, it drew mixed reactions: audience members and critics were dismissive or generous in their praise, some were moved to tears, and some returned to view the work again.

From my own perspective, the women taught me an enormous amount. Through three versions and reworkings of *Em, Nguoi Phu Nu Viet Nam* I encountered the same frustrations of lethargy, inattention and inconsistency in rehearsals. But I have watched the performances develop into rich and detailed nuances of the most simple movements. I have learnt to appreciate the power of the restrictions which they impose on themselves as women in order to bring to their performances a distinctly female emotional and spiritual meaning which elevates their dancing from that of mere performers to that of artists. A young Australian woman who saw the show in Melbourne in July 1996, called this quality 'grace', for its spiritual as well as its physical connotations. Selma Jeanne Cohen expresses a similar quality in describing the difference between Japanese dance and classical ballet (Jones, B., 1983: 93)

> ....technical perfection and precision in the physical sense do not come first in the evaluation of [Asian] classical dance. Rather the criterion is the atmosphere of the delicate nuance the dancers may create around themselves on stage.

Although this work was made especially as a tribute to the qualities of the women in the Dance

[3] Literally translates as 'You/I , young sister, the Vietnamese Woman' which we called in English, 'Land of Waiting Souls'.

Theatre of Vietnam, there seems to be plenty of opportunities in the normal repertoire for the female dancers to play major roles, and as the company is quite small (between twenty and twenty five dancers) most dancers are cast in solo roles at some stage of the year's schedule. Opportunities to perform with other companies, one-off events and television and variety specials occur quite frequently, so that many of the dancers maintain a sporadic schedule of performances outside the official company engagements, both for economic reasons and also to gain experience in other situations. Currently very little of the work inside or outside the company is particularly challenging and so many of the women seem to have lost incentive to push themselves in class and rehearsal. They maintain the minimum standards required, preferring to save energy for their children and families.

Unlike most dancers in the West who tend to stop performing and touring once they have children, all the dancers in the company continue performing after becoming mothers, usually when the child is about three months old.

Both men and women have jobs until retirement with salary rises based on seniority, offering little incentive for professional development. Nor does it encourage dancers to tax themselves physically/technically in classes and rehearsals beyond what is required in order to dance adequately. Consequently standards tend to drop within a year or two of graduation. Women and men's salaries are at the same rate, with full maternity leave of up to a year if necessary for women. However since the salary retainers are appallingly low, averaging around US $35 a month, dancers must find as much extra work as possible in order to survive.

e) : NON-PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Despite a policy of non-discrimination, senior artistic and executive roles , other than as dancers, in the Dance Theatre of Vietnam are presently filled by men. This has been the case ever since I have been visiting the company in 1988. This is surprising considering the percentage of women in senior positions in other companies. It would be easy to assume that there was an agenda within the national company to keep women out of senior positions but I have not seen any evidence of this. It is even stranger when one looks at the composition of the company where there are as many experienced female dancers as male, with an equivalent number who have had extensive training (up to eight years) in Russia and are of an equivalent technical standard as the men.

The fact that the last four dancers to have the opportunity to work and study overseas for a year or more - four in France and one in Australia - are also male, may seem extremely inequitable and it is. But scholarships from the West are often offered to males, rather than females, because of the shortage of well-trained and good professional male dancers in the West. The other reason is that women who have reached an equivalent standard are often already married and do not wish to leave their children for such a long time. And of course it remains socially more acceptable, not only in Vietnam, for a man to undertake professional development away from his wife and children.

Senior dancers are offered time away from company commitments to study for their degree at the

Hanoi Institute of Theatre and Cinema, specialising in either teaching or choreography. Currently more women than men from the company are enrolled. At least one has finished her degree but has not been given teaching opportunities. At present it is the men who guest teach for the National Dance School, Army School and other institutions. In the field of choreography also, with the occasional exception, it seems to be the men who are given greater opportunities to hone their skills.

f) PROMOTION AND SENIORITY

A further reason for this 'glass ceiling' within the Dance Theatre of Vietnam is promotion practices within the company to executive positions. It is well known that it is difficult to gain this kind of promotion without being a member of the Communist Party. To become a member one must be nominated by another member and at least two cultural reasons would seem to mediate against women in this regard. The first one is quite simply an old boys' network which seems to operate in political circles in Vietnam. Women are not exactly excluded but neither are they invited to participate. Only the strongest and most ambitious women are prepared to compete against men in this way. Secondly the engrained vestiges of Confucianism such as modesty, compliance and obedience may be a factor in preventing many women in engaging in open and direct competition with men.

Given these attitudes it is not surprising that the two dance institutions directed by women are primarily engaged in teaching which is in any case considered one of the 'female' professions. It is less surprising that Chu Thuy Quynh, a Party member as well as a member of the National Assembly, is the director of the other national dance company and the Vietnamese Association of Dance Artists.

Furthermore the rigid hierarchy inherent in the training and practice of European classical ballet, with its emphasis on discipline, unquestioning obedience, repetitive learning and respect for that hierarchy, must only serve to reinforce vestiges of Confucian teachings that are never far below the surface of revolutionary liberation. The paradigm qualities of the ballerina - beauty and silence - has much in common with two of the four female virtues of Confucianism.

3: POWER RELATIONS WITHIN THE WORKPLACE

a) INSTITUTIONAL VERSUS INFORMAL POWER RELATIONS

The above section has outlined the almost total male dominance in the current institutional set up of authority roles within the Dance Theatre of Vietnam. This situation seems to reflect the continuance of a tradition which Richard Brislin (1993: 262) refers to as 'Confucian dynamism', that is, the concept that unequal status leads to a stable society, ironically a concept which is against the basic tenet of Marxism. The fact that many Vietnamese still seem, outwardly at least, to accept the Communist political system at the same time as embracing capitalism, may stem from a belief in the principle that stability can only be achieved by strong and authoritative leadership. Allied to this is the understanding by people of collective cultures that a leader will look after his/her interests in a 'familial' style, which includes a sense of family identification and mutual obligation.

In many ways the dance company reflects the above approach. It has a strong sense of family in which relationships, though strongly defined institutionally, are remarkably fluid in practice and where mutual concern, respect and obligation are played out against ever-changing dominant roles, as much a product of personalities, skills and needs as of official title. In this underlying re-alignment of informal power relationships the position of several women in the company appears pivotal. Observations of this undercurrent have only occurred in the rehearsal and performance situation however, as I have limited access to other situations apart from attendence at some company meetings, where I cannot be sure how much normal proceedings are affected by my presence.

It has been surprising, when engaged in formal analysis of gender roles within the company, to find such a male dominated senior staff, because my impression in working closely with the company has been that many of the women are strong and outspoken about their opinions which are taken seriously by the company. My impression has also been that several of the more experienced women wield considerable influence in the company's day to day workings and dynamics. This is in contrast to their previously mentioned lack of physical assertiveness in their dancing.

For a Western woman to understand why Vietnamese women would accept this non-recognition of their considerable experience by the power structure, it is helpful to remember several cultural factors including: the importance of the group over the individual in interpersonal and societal dealings; the highly respected trait of modesty - especially in women - specifically not seeking individual praise for achievements or initiatives; and the crucial importance of maintaining harmonious relations.[4]

Keeping these cultural parameters in mind it is easier to understand why not competing openly with men is not so much a sign of submission, but perhaps an unwillingness to betray one's essential feminine nature where public acknowledgement of authority and ability may be less important than achieving one's goal within, or in spite of, the existing system.

b) INTEGRATION WITH, NOT SEPARATION FROM, NOR COMPETITION AGAINST.

In this regard it is also pertinent to reflect on Trinh Minh-Ha's statement (1989: 39): 'Between knowledge and power, there is room for knowledge without power'. In the female culture which emerges and sits within a male dominated structure, an effective *modus operandi* can and does emerge. In Western discourse it might be described as : 'innovation within the broader idiom of repetition and acquiescence rather [than] within the idiom of total rupture' (Ram, 1995:52). Alternative sources of useful power may well be the innovation I often sense but cannot articulate in the complex gender/power relations within the Dance Theatre of Vietnam.

The decision taken by many women artists in Vietnam to avoid open competition and self-promotion does not imply acceptance; nor does it indicate any lack of ambition. Neither is it

[4] For more detailed information on cultural difference and/or Vietnamese cultural mores regarding gender issues see Brislin, (1993), 248-320, Marr, (1981),190-251, Nguyen Dang Lien, (1985), 108-121, and throughout Mai Thi Tu & Le Thi Nham Tuyet, (1978).

purely a result of social conditioning. Women may in fact have determined their own priorities and achieve them without resisting openly the power structure as it exists, but equally without being dependent on it. This has been both a survival and a revolutionary strategy of Vietnamese women for many centuries. It is the nature of how it is manifested that differs.

Importantly, as in many Asian cultures, Vietnamese women have historically preferred to exert power and influence behind the scenes within the existing conditions, rather than in the public domain. This still seems to hold for many contemporary women today.

Amongst Western women artists there tends to be a certain distance between professional practice and other areas of their lives even though one impacts upon the other. In Vietnam, this line is considerably blurred. It is dangerous to assume that priorities of family and children in women's lives are always culturally determined, or a biological necessity. It may well be that in some cases a woman's self-definition includes nurturing as its prime component. In this case, the nurturing aspect of her identity feeds strongly into her professional life, rather than creating a binary opposition and her seeds of power may well lie in this ability rather than in spite of it - but not in the manner historically constructed by men.

However, the fact that there seems to be the space for this independence and choice may turn out to be illusory, as Trinh Minh-Ha warns (1991: 186):

> What is given in the context of power relations and its systems of dependence is likely to be taken back according to where the wind blows. *Flies meet death in sweet honey* (Vietnamese proverb).

4: CONCLUSION - THE PARADOX OF FORM AND CONTENT

In contemplating the position of women in Vietnam within the microcosm of the dance world, one becomes aware of a number of dialectics; dependence and independence, perceived powerlessness and considerable influence, and the integration of family and professional life. From a Western perspective, the dichotomies that emerge become enmeshed in a series of possibilities all of which contribute to glimpses of understanding. For the Vietnamese, however, who do not see the world in binary oppositions, integration and co-existence of the above without an opposing sense of contradiction, is quite natural in a country in which people can easily blend Buddhist, Communist, Animist and Catholic beliefs at the same time.

Ba Trieu has inspired generations of women, from the days of Chinese domination to the present, to resist powerlessness with her actions and words (translation from Trinh Minh-Ha, 1992: 63):

> I only want to ride the winds and the waves, slay the big whales of the Eastern sea, clean up frontiers, and save the people from drowning. Why should I imitate others, bow my head, stoop over and be slave to a man?

We all need myths, heroines and dreams, and it seems for women in many cultures their dreams are often played out in subtle and subversive ways in feminine worlds within a shared culture. The Vietnamese government claims impressive statistics about the gains women have made in the workforce. According to Truong My Hoa, president of the Vietnam Women's Union and the

National Committee for the Advancement of Women (1994:2), the proportion of women in the workforce in the industries listed below is as follows: 65% in light industry, 70% in agriculture, 70.8% in commerce, 54% in finance and credit, and 46.4% in telecommunications. However these figures do not identify what is the percentage of jobs within these categories that require unskilled labour. Neither do they reveal the conditions under which women work nor their rates of pay. If available, such figures might only reveal another form of exploitation.

Conversely, in the microcosm of a particular situation such as the Dance Theatre of Vietnam, statistics of massive gender/power imbalances may not be quite what they seem. Ironically in terms of the more lucrative dance opportunities, consisting of versions of traditional dance or cabaret dance for tourists and business entertainment, the women are predictably more in demand and therefore have the potential to earn more money than their male colleagues. This aspect of commercial dance practice is becoming more and more prevalent given the increasing demand and the higher cost of living. Although it is not the subject of this paper it does raise the pertinent issue of exploitation of the female body, and the resulting devaluation of feminine artistic practice in dance.

Since the 1950's in the areas of health, legal rights, economic participation and benefits, education and career opportunities, Vietnamese women have made extraordinary progress , and their contribution to all areas of their country's development including the arts and dance, is highly visible and impressive. But women in Vietnam have had a long history of sacrificing their own goals for their country; to fight colonialism, to fight for independence, to fight for reunification. Now they are being asked to make sacrifices for the economy. How can we answer how far these sacrifices have produced *nam nu binh dang* (equality of the sexes)? Amongst Vietnamese women today there would be a range of very different answers depending on who was asked, even within the relatively closed and cohesive dance world. As outsiders to the particular situation which is Vietnam, it is salutary to be reminded, in this instance by 'Ly' (ibid.:73) that:

> [y]ou have to be careful when you look at our society. There is the form and there is the content. Truth is not always found in what is visible.....Our reality is inhabited by silent tears and sobs....Women's liberation? You are still joking, aren't you?

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